



**State of the City of Terre Haute  
Kevin Burke, Mayor  
January 20, 2005**

Members of the City Council, distinguished guests, and fellow citizens:

Let me tell you all that I'm pleased you are here today. Seeing your faces encourages me and tells me that you support this administration in the steps we've taken during the past year to improve the quality of life for the citizens of Terre Haute.

I am amazed, flattered, overwhelmed – and I would say speechless, but those of you who know me realize I'm rarely speechless – by the support I have received and continue to receive from so many of you. Literally thousands of emails, telephone calls and letters have flooded my office during the past year; some offering suggestions, but the majority voicing support for what we're doing. Here is where I must thank my two administrative Assistants, Marcia Jackson and Don Morris. You, the citizens flatter me with the trust you have placed in me, and your encouragement shows me that you want to see improvements in Terre Haute as much as I want to make them happen. You have played, and will continue to play, an important role in this city. So I thank you.

Many of the accomplishments I'll detail in my time with you today are groundwork for bigger and better things to come. I've said more than once this past year that my utmost frustration about this job is the pace at which change can occur.

And while the pace of change in 2004 has sometimes been slower than I might have preferred, in no way do I believe the efforts of the 2004 administration of the City of Terre Haute have been in vain.

In case you may think I'm doubtful, now is the time to display my confidence in our people and the world-class strengths of Terre Haute.

The team that graciously works alongside me includes the city department heads and chiefs and this team has not been idle. We have not been content with the status quo. We have challenged traditions. We have pushed our employees to perform at a higher level. And we will continue to do so throughout the coming years.

In 2005, I expect you will begin to see the fruit of much of our labor. I intend for 2004 to be viewed as the year when progress in Terre Haute truly began. And in order to make that happen, we have our work cut out for us.

Our visions, plans and investments are long-term and require dedication and perseverance, not only from myself as Mayor but from my Council colleagues, from our staff that works so hard, from our residents, and from our neighboring partners. And this year's efforts certainly won't – and shouldn't – cease by this time next year.

We faced special challenges in 2004, but we operated within our means and we will continue to do so. We worked to bring spending in line with our revenues. We have shown our ability to manage effectively and creatively. All the while, our goals to make Terre Haute cleaner, safer, and economically stronger did not sit on a shelf.

## WE ARE A CLEANER TERRE HAUTE

It won't surprise you to hear me say Terre Haute residents rarely agree on anything when it comes to politics. But everyone seems to share the desire for Terre Haute to look better. We have made a tremendous commitment this year to improving the appearance of our city.

In February, we created the Environmental Protection Department and last year, officers of that department handled 8,109 cases and issued 2,168 citations. The majority of those citations were handed out to people who littered or allowed their yards to become overrun with litter. In April, we increased the fines associated with littering from a maximum of \$85 to a maximum of \$500 because we want the residents of Terre Haute to know we are serious about fixing this problem. And while it took us a while to make some of these messes, we realize it also will take us a while to see that all of them are cleaned up. But, we will continue to support this department with necessary equipment, and funds. And we'll be adding two employees to this department in 2005.

We're also continuing to look for ways to improve the cleanliness of our city and find more cost-efficient ways to enable the citizens of Terre Haute to keep the city clean. At the risk of alienating some of you, let me advise you that our preliminary assessment of the annual leaf pick-up program leaves doubts about whether that service should continue. It is a program that costs the city 12 weeks of man-hours and \$300,000 annually to maintain and we will exhaustively research options and continue to weigh the benefits of this program.

With this in mind, I encourage all of you in the months to come to act on the desire you've expressed to me to have a cleaner Terre Haute. We cannot continue to affect change in our city without acknowledging first what each one of us has done to create the problem and what we can do personally to fix it. If every resident of Terre Haute would accept the challenge to improve the appearance of our city, we have the potential to become one of the most attractive communities in this country.

Along with our appearance, WE ARE WORKING TO IMPROVE THE IMAGE OF TERRE HAUTE.

From littered streets to buckling sidewalks, I set out the first day of my first campaign to address Terre Haute's negative image. And now two years later, I haven't wavered off that course.

Buckling and dilapidating sidewalks plague our residents, and I'm happy to tell you we'll repair more sidewalks in 2005 than were repaired in the previous five years combined. Using a method called Integrated Roadway Management, we will begin assessing entire roadways (including the sidewalks) as we identify areas in need of repair and upgrade. We anticipate significant savings as we complete street, drainage and sidewalk repairs with one pass and avoid revisiting the area several times to complete all phases of the repair.

We're also working to improve our image by investing in the quality of our streets. The Engineering Department accomplished this year what some believed was impossible. By contracting local firms to

design and build the section of Locust Street between 25th Street and Brown Avenue, we completed that project in less than a year.

We'll continue street improvements this year as we spend \$5,000,000 to improve drainage on Hulman Street between 13th Street and Thompson ditch. This increased capacity drainage system will alleviate problems that have plagued residents along Hulman Street for years. Improvements should also pique developers' interest in the property at 13th and Hulman streets. The improvements are preparation for the four-lane extension of 13th Street from Hulman to I-70. And ultimately, these improvements are designed to make Terre Haute a more attractive city.

Much of the city's image problem has to do with our indiscernible odor. This administration has been aggressively tackling the problem since January of 2004 when we began meeting with every employer located along First Street to discuss what they are doing to contribute to the south side smells. We've pinpointed and addressed problems we could fix; lent our support in areas we couldn't fix, and examined how we as a city might be contributing to the problem.



With that in mind, we resumed responsibility for operation of the city's wastewater treatment plant in September after five years of paying an independent contractor to run it for us. With a 40-year-old wastewater treatment facility and underground pipes in serious need of costly repair, we began assessing sewage billing rates. Our analysis of sewage billing statements from providers throughout the state of Indiana made us realize our rates were substantially less than most. There is no doubt that our rates needed to be raised to improve the quality of life in this community. We'll use the extra fees we collect to offset \$30 million in improvements.

The ultimate goal of these sewer projects is to improve the environment. The Wabash River is in our front yard and restoring it so that everyone can enjoy recreational activities there while showcasing it as a catalyst for economic development only makes sense. Besides being an important part of our history, the Wabash River should be an equally important part of our future and it is our responsibility to preserve it.

Our image cannot be improved with only the mayor's office leading the charge to improve it. To achieve our goals, we must look at things from all perspectives and work together, as allies focused on the bigger picture. That's why I've been encouraged by the sense of teamwork we've experienced in 2004.

Our police department has partnered with the Vigo County Sheriff's Department to combine resources for a Special Response Team. Fortunately for our community, emergency situations rarely occur that require a specific response from a team of specially trained officers. Using personnel from city and county agencies in these rare emergency situations allows the police department and the sheriff's department to better align valuable and limited resources.

City and county law enforcement and elected officials have admirably teamed this year to curtail the manufacturing of methamphetamine in our community. City police teamed with the Vigo County Prosecutor's office to produce public service announcements that emphasize the negative effects of meth use and addiction. City and county officials also are implementing legislation that requires retailers to document

and report the sale of products containing ephedrine, pseudoephedrine or phenylpropanolamine - the primary ingredients used in the manufacturing of methamphetamine. We already are known throughout the state as the city with a meth problem, and we are aggressively working to change that image.

Teamwork is also evident between the city street and county highway departments. Department supervisors have discussed how snow removal practices can be improved. It just makes sense for these two areas to cooperate and come together to clear snow filled roads rather than driving down uncleared roads with their plows raised. And that's the problem we're working to solve. I have no doubt; with continued teamwork on this issue we can work out a win-win situation for the city and county. That is why I will be asking for and supporting the formation of a Unification and Cooperation Committee.

I commend members of the Terre Haute City Council who endorsed my proposal to make operational changes at the wastewater treatment plant, change the handling of sewage billing, raise rates, and improve the infrastructure of our sewers. The Council and

members of my administration spent a year discussing how we might improve the infrastructure of the sewer system.

Partnerships have also been evident among the city and the Chamber of Commerce, the Economic Development Corp. and Terre Haute Tomorrow. In August, the four groups announced their endorsement of the “Level Above” logo. We are updating our letterhead, and insignias on city-owned vehicles to reflect the new logo. Granted, it’s a small step, but it’s yet another step in improving the image of the city of Terre Haute.

Our partnerships aren’t just limited to other arms of government. We can think big and small about this. In either case, great things will come.

WE ARE PUTTING OURSELVES IN A POSITION TO ATTRACT  
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT.

The majority of our work, as the City of Terre Haute, is done through some sort of partnership – with the private sector, the community,

nonprofit agencies, and others. We consider ourselves an important partner in new development. Our presence is important in two ways: to ensure that Terre Haute grows in the right way and to provide a supportive environment for growth.

We want to make it so enjoyable, to do business with the City of Terre Haute that there's simply no question where developers would like to work most. But in 2004, many changes were necessary for us to place ourselves in that position.

We have spent much of the past year readying ourselves for the growth we believe is to come, and much of that preparation has occurred within City Hall. We have focused, and we are continuing to focus, on providing employees with the tools they need to do their jobs. And I have relied heavily on the City Maintenance Department to make many of these changes happen.

For the first six months of 2004, we took on the task of relocating the police department and moving more than 120 employees out of City Hall and into new headquarters at 1211 Wabash Avenue.

Housing the Police Department in such an incredibly small space simply did not make sense. And opening up that space to be used by the City Legal Department, the Human Resources Department and the Board of Public Works and Safety – the departments that visitors to City Hall are most likely to visit – is simply a better way for us to serve the residents of Terre Haute. I'm happy to tell you, moving the Police Department cost the city less than \$100,000, and that figure includes nine months worth of rent we paid for the new space in 2004.

During 2004, the police department also:

- Obtained \$20,000 in grant money
- Brought up to date our records by entering report information from three years of backlog
- Provided officers with 7,213 hours of training
- Rectified recurring communication problems by removing encryption from main channels and reinstating channels with county and state police agencies

And through partnership with the Vigo County Drug Task Force, we:

- Arrested 299 people on Methamphetamine related charges,  
and
- Discovered and shut down 166 Meth labs

Renovations to the south side of the main floor of City Hall will continue in 2005 as we spend \$250,000 to enhance space that will accommodate the City Court offices, the City Legal Department, the Human Resources Department, the Board of Public Works and Safety and the City Clerk's office. Modifying this workspace, particularly for the City Clerk's office, is long overdue. The six employees of that department work in less than 400 square feet of space and those are tight quarters – even for people who like one another.

All of these changes were spurred by the realization that City Hall offices and restrooms were not accessible to those with disabilities. After a citywide assessment, it became abundantly clear City Hall was the epicenter of non-compliance and changes had to occur.

Beyond the issue of office renovations, in 2004 we created a Human Resources Department. In less than nine months, that department has created and written job descriptions for every employee in the city. And with those job descriptions, supervisors now have the tools they need to accurately and fairly assess job performance.

We moved City Hall into the 21<sup>st</sup> century this year with the addition of a citywide computer network, a citywide intranet, and the first city website. All of this work took place under the direction of Information Technology supervisor and his new staff who serve as the web administrator, the public safety software administrator and the network administrator. The Police and Fire Departments as well as the Wastewater Treatment Facility were added to the network.

With the addition of this new technology comes the need for us to keep our employees informed about the latest developments in IT and other areas. In the coming year, we will commit to funding training through continuing education classes and seminars in order to keep the skills of our employees current.



## FIRE DEPARTMENT

History may have been made in Terre Haute this year when four new firefighters were sworn in at City Hall in October. What's historical about this is the fact that I, as Mayor, had never met any of these young men before I shook their hand at the ceremony. I can say the same for all 11 of the firefighters who were hired in 2004.

During my campaign for mayor, I vowed to improve city business by putting the best and the brightest in city jobs, and with these hires, I believe that's exactly what we have done. Replacing members of the Fire Department Merit Commission showed my commitment to ending political patronage in the City of Terre Haute. I am committed to preserving the integrity of the Merit System for city police officers and firefighters, and I am committed to hiring applicants based on their qualifications and promoting employees based on merit.

Grants totaling more the \$254,000 were acquired for the purchase of much needed equipment. Gradual replacement of vehicles has already begun with the purchase of a new ambulance and plans for a

new Ladder Truck in the works. The grant money allowed for the addition of two new trailers, a Hazmat vehicle, a support vehicle and a 1 ton pull vehicle. We have improved firefighters' safety with the addition of 24 hour Safety Officers.

Over \$343,373 was returned to the general fund from the EMS Services. We hope in the near future to reduce the epidemic of sick time thus reducing the amount of overtime needed.

Organization, accountability and security were dramatically increased in 2004. The goal for the Fire Department is to improve the department's image, service and morale with the end product being increased pride and passion for this time-honored profession.

WE ARE FACING OUR CHALLENGES HEAD ON.

While we've concentrated this first year on improving our performance and getting ourselves equipped for the challenges of

competing for economic growth, the Department of Redevelopment continued to address our ever-growing needs.

With \$1.1 million in bond money, Redevelopment built an access road in Fort Harrison Business Park and repaved a section of Steepleton Road adjacent to the park. We also used bond proceeds in the amount of \$975,000 to construct access roads and a water line to serve the new 200,000-square-foot Radley L.P. building in the Jadcore Industrial Park.

We purchased the 17-acre parcel of land at 13<sup>th</sup> and Hulman streets that housed the former Terre Haute Coke and Carbon facility, and we will continue preparing this property for economic development.

We made street lighting, drainage and infrastructure improvements on the north side of the ISU campus.

And in the areas of housing, we partnered with Habitat for Humanity to assist three low-income families purchase new homes. We also

partnered with Light House Mission to build five residential housing units on the third floor of the mission building.

Working with Hamilton Center, we financed construction of 56 apartments at 1401 Lafayette Ave. We also financed the renovation of downtown office facilities through Downtown tax allocation proceeds for the Chamber of Commerce, Terre Haute Economic Development Corporation and a beauty salon.

If we hope to build on these success stories in 2005, we absolutely must turn our attention toward our sewer system. Better sewers protect the environment and prepare us for growth. And any attempts we make to draw economic development to our city are often clouded by the apologies we must make for the inadequacies of our sewage system. New companies want to know we can manage their waste efficiently, and homebuilders want to know we have the capacity they need to accommodate sewage and drainage for their new construction.

That's why we'll be concentrating much of our effort in 2005 on sewer improvements.

The expansion and improved maintenance of city streets will also make us more attractive and ripe for development. That's why we invested \$750,000 in new equipment for the Street Department in 2004 and why we'll continue to invest in the department in 2005. Let me emphasize again, it's imperative that we equip our workers with the tools they need in order to obtain the quality of work we demand.

With help from the Department of Redevelopment, sections of 25<sup>th</sup>, 26<sup>th</sup>, 27<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup> streets were inspected, designed and rebuilt in 2004. More repairs to those streets will be completed in 2005. And with a glowing audit from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, our redevelopment efforts will continue in 2005 as we remain in good standing with our primary funding source.

When we began looking at our finances in 2004, the situation was bleak. Credible financial statements were not available for two reasons: (1) the state of Indiana had recently mandated a

reassessment, and (2) balances of a majority of city accounts simply were not available.

Today, I can say with certainty that the financial position of the city is solvent. We reached this conclusion during the past year after countless hours of work from the city controller and his staff, expertise and guidance from the State Board of Accounts, and financial appropriations (to pay for the assistance and overtime hours) from the City Council.

And as we begin 2005, I am convinced things are looking up for Terre Haute, but we have to continue to carefully handle our resources. With property tax limitations and reduced state funding, there is little margin for error.

That's why we must press for long-term solutions to building the community we want, complete with the services that are essential to good living: services like public safety, safe roads, parks, employers, and jobs.

Economic development is essential to our community's success. And we need more of it. Simply relying on existing reserves, ignoring funding cuts or asking Terre Haute residents for more taxes and fees won't give us the long-term success we crave.

The only guaranteed way to improve our quality of living is through growth. So let's do more growing. We've got what it takes. We have the land, the quality of life, the location, and we have the workforce. Let's start building on our partnerships to bring new development to Terre Haute. Let's use our stories of success, our invitations and our can-do attitude to encourage new business. They'll bring new jobs and new sources of revenue for our budget. They will give back.

We also need to make the most of what we have by continuing to help the businesses that are already here. If we nurture what we already have, we will be rewarded with job growth. We need to take advantage of the housing that already exists and fix the roads that we have. And we already have an untapped resource to work with: namely, our downtown.

Like so many American downtowns, ours has struggled. However, our downtown offers a great deal, including museums, Indiana State University, a developing arts corridor and historic buildings. We need to utilize our infrastructure, and inspire people to come downtown.

We have some great success stories that prove people will come downtown. Homegrown Terre Haute businesses like Market Bella Rosa, The Asian Market, Coffee Grounds, Crossroads Cafe and The Saratoga Restaurant are doing well, paying taxes and luring people downtown.

We hope to broaden that horizon with a purchase agreement we signed with owners of the Terre Haute House property. We are actively soliciting redevelopment proposals from prospective developers. And while we're cautiously optimistic, we remain hopeful that downtown Terre Haute will be as viable to our future as it has been to our history.

Because of what Terre Haute has to offer, I am confident 2005 can be another year of change. You've demonstrated to me your



commitment to this community. There is an ever-growing sense that things are happening, and that Terre Haute is going somewhere. And it's true.

Those of you who have worked with me know that I am a realist. I am devoted to keeping our eyes on what matters. We have so much to work with, and we've already accomplished such great things. We have a community to be proud of.

I intend to build on the foundation we've worked so intently this year to build. Our partnerships, our commitment to improving our image, our preparations for economic development and our quality of life are assets we can sell.

Let's spend 2005 securing our future and raising Terre Haute to a level above.